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RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 3133
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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3863
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0719
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1189
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RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 5222
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 0141

RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 4275
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 6214
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8557
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 003461

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

[1](#)1. NIE Report on Iran

[1](#)2. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz (Hebrew Ed.) led with a comment made on Wednesday to the

press by IAEA Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei that the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) report "vindicated" Tehran. Yediot reported that IDF Intelligence and the Mossad will review their own assessments following the differing conclusions in the NIE. Yediot reported that on Friday FM Livni and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will meet with representatives from NATO countries and ask them not to give up sanctions against Iran. Ha'aretz quoted President Shimon Peres as saying on Wednesday that the world should not be quiet.

Israel Radio reported that PM Ehud Olmert, FM Tzipi Livni, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak will convene today to prepare for the peace negotiations that start in nine days. Among the issues on the agenda is the Palestinian demand for full rights to water in their territory. The Jerusalem Post quoted Livni as saying during a visit to Slovenia on Tuesday that international involvement in the bilateral track is undesirable. In a different article, The Jerusalem Post quoted Palestinian Authority officials as threaten to boycott negotiations if the IDF invades Gaza.

Speaking on IDF Radio on Wednesday, IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi said that the army is prepared for a large-scale operation in Gaza. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Defense Minister Barak as saying during a visit to troops in Gaza that Israel will act only as a last resort. Speaking on IDF Radio on Wednesday, IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi said that the army is prepared for a large-scale operation in Gaza. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Defense Minister Barak as saying during a visit to troops in Gaza that Israel will act only as a last resort.

Major media reported that on Wednesday undercover IDF troops mistakenly shot and killed a Palestinian policeman in Bethlehem. Three Hamas militants were killed by IDF fire in the Gaza Strip. The media reported that several Qassam rockets were fired at Israel.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Tuesday Hebron settlers petitioned the High Court of Justice to stop the army from evicting settlers who squatted in a building on the road between Kiryat Arba and the Cave of the Patriarchs.

Ha'aretz and Yediot cited the fear of settlers that the IDF wants to gather all the weapons held by security officers in the settlements.

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The lead story in Ha'aretz (English Ed.) is on Internal Security Minister Avi Dichter's cancellation of a trip to the UK over fears that he may be arrested for his role in the assassination of Salah Shehadeh, the head of Hamas's military wing, in July 2002.

Maariv reported that the Israeli-Arab leaders have rejected the government's call to take part in the celebrations of Israel's 60th anniversary.

Under the headline, "The Russians Are Returning to the Mediterranean," Maariv reported on the presence of Russian warships 250 km from Israel's coast.

Leading media reported that Israeli archeologists have uncovered a monumental Second Temple structure opposite the Temple Mount that was likely Queen Helena's palace (dating from the 1st century CE).

Leading media reported that on Wednesday El Al announced plans to

buy four Boeing planes and start a code-sharing program with American Airlines in an effort to cash in on the increase in Israeli tourism to the U.S. and vice-versa..

I. NIE Report on Iran:

Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "While Iran continues threatening to annihilate Israel, what American intelligence thinks about Iran's nuclear capability is irrelevant.... Israel is the only country that cannot let its guard down."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Through a politically tainted effort to sow unwarranted complacency, the agencies charged with advancing America's security and interests have delivered a terrible blow to their own mandates."

Dr. Avner Cohen, author of "Israel and the Bomb," and a senior research fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, wrote in Ha'aretz: "If the American intelligence community seeks to provide the public with an understanding of Iran's nuclear program, this report proved flimsy."

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized: "The State Department and the CIA prefer to adopt a conciliatory, submissive policy vis-a-vis the Ayatollahs. An authentic public, citizen groundswell could revive the Bush-Cheney spirit."

The ultra-Orthodox Hamodi'a editorialized: "As long as it enriches uranium, Iran remains under suspicion that it will use it for military purposes."

Block Quotes:

I. "The World's Nudnik"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/6): "While Iran continues threatening to annihilate Israel, what American intelligence thinks about Iran's nuclear capability is irrelevant. It is not fantasy or paranoia when we hear regular, concrete threats from Tehran. The threats may be just a familiar background hum in the world's ears, but it is Israel's duty to persuade the world to listen.... Israel may now seem like the world's nudnik, now that American intelligence has sounded the all clear. But Israel is the only country that cannot let its guard down.... There is no information allowing us to judge Iran's intentions, but there is cumulative information that Iran has been enriching uranium to make nuclear weapons at various secret sites and has both the manufacturing capability and scientific expertise to produce nuclear arms at any time. The American intelligence report neither increases nor reduces the fear. It cannot justify a policy change or a calming down. The report establishes that if Iran wants to produce a bomb it can do so, and if it doesn't want to, it won't. This evaluation may have a restraining effect in internal American politics. But in Israeli politics it should cause the opposite reaction because any weakness in the American approach, which is bound to affect Europe, endangers Israel."

II. "A Political Reversal"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/6): "Either Iran is 'determined' to develop nukes, as the ... US intelligence community said 11 months ago, or it has 'halted' its weapons program.... Actually, there is nothing in January's dire intelligence assessment that could not have been repeated in the current NIE. The choice not to do so seems a political one, designed to take the US military option off the table.... [The NIE report] even argues that sanctions, which were non-existent then, persuaded Iran to drop its weapons program in 2003. President George Bush highlighted this aspect and called for redoubling the sanctions effort. The problem, of course, is that the NIE's rather incredible efforts to declare Iran's nuclear threat non-existent

could have the collateral effect of taking the wind out of the international sanctions campaign as well.... The NIE may obscure but does not change the fact that the Iranian menace will grow, and the world will become a more dangerous place, until the regime falls or is forced to back down. Through a politically tainted effort to sow unwarranted complacency, the agencies charged with advancing America's security and interests have delivered a terrible blow to their own mandates. So this, too, will be added to the challenges that democracies must now overcome. "

III. "Not the Best Intelligence"

Dr. Avner Cohen, author of "Israel and the Bomb," and a senior research fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, wrote in Ha'aretz (12/6): "It is understandable that the [NIE] report reveals nothing directly regarding U.S. intelligence's capability to quickly pinpoint significant developments and changes in Iran's nuclear program. But indirectly, it is clear that American capability is feeble in this critical realm. The report itself provides proof of this. If one assumes that the American intelligence community recognized only last summer that some four years ago, Iran suspended or halted its work on weaponization, it is clear that the United States' aptitude in the realm of intelligence is suboptimal. If the American intelligence community seeks to provide the public with an understanding of Iran's nuclear program, this report proved flimsy."

IV. "Don't Trust the Americans"

The nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe editorialized (12/6): "One does not have to be in the CIA ... to decipher the violent anti-Semitic speeches of Iranian President Ahmadinejad, who publicly calls for genocide and speaks about the destruction of Israel.... But the views of the American leadership are not monolithic. Whereas Bush and Cheney have sworn not to allow Iran to acquire capabilities that could bring about a world war, administration branches such as the State Department and the CIA prefer to adopt a conciliatory, submissive policy vis-a-vis the Ayatollahs. An authentic public, citizen groundswell could revive the Bush-Cheney spirit. Anyway, Israel should muster the courage to face the Iranian threat alone. Israel can do it."

IV. "American Intelligence in Iran"

The ultra-Orthodox Hamodi'a editorialized (12/6): "Not every country in the world views the U.S. report as soothing material. All the more, unlike the U.S., a distant country beyond the ocean, European countries, which are within the range of the Iranian missiles, have not been placated by the American report. As long as it enriches uranium, Iran remains under suspicion that it will use it for military purposes."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

The ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized: "The news that U.S. President George Bush is expected to come to Israel on an official visit in a few weeks, as part of a broad diplomatic tour of the region, is considered an additional milestone in Bush's ever growing involvement in Mideast diplomatic processes."

Block Quotes:

"Bush's Visit"

The ultra-Orthodox Yated Ne'eman editorialized (12/6): "The news that U.S. President George Bush is expected to come to Israel on an official visit in a few weeks, as part of a broad diplomatic tour of the region, is considered an additional milestone in Bush's ever growing involvement in Mideast diplomatic processes... The stalemate in the diplomatic process is hampering Israel-U.S. relations. But this is not a real crisis. It may be assumed that the strong connection between the two countries, which is based on common

interests, is established enough to withstand fleeting confrontations and crises."

JONES